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A VIEW FROM THE HVIVO / OPEN ORPHAN #ORPH LABORATORY – PROFESSOR JOHN OXFORD

MARCH 31, 2020 – POSTED IN: OPEN ORPHAN (ORPH) – TAGS: CATHAL FRIEL, COVID 19, HVIVO, NIGHTINGALE HOSPITAL, OPEN ORPHAN, ORPH, PETER DOHERTY, PNEUMOCOCCUS



With Marie's help and encouragement from the scientific group and Cathal Friel, I am re starting "My View" Series which will be as before, a mixture of Science and with a personal view. Marie is very important, not least since she can read my writing after a 5-year absence. I am pleased to be back. I am Chairing the Scientific Advisory Group (SAG), and I am of drawing up a list of the good and famous! We (SAG) will meet once per year.

Actually during today so far there are two initiatives which pleased me. Firstly, I can see the initiative in the 2000 bed Nightingale Hospital in East London. In the Great Pandemic of 1918, which killed 250,000 young people in the UK a Prize possession was not a doctor but a nurse. Quiet nursing saved many lives at home where otherwise most people died. There were more beds in 1919 than today around 180,000 but most were occupied by wounded soldiers. There were no antibiotics, but oxygen and masks were used for intensive patients. On my next round Robin, I will discuss antivirals/vaccines.

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SEARCH

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In 1918 a group of pathologists began to make a vaccine against the microbe pneumococcus which caused half the deaths by super infection, but the war ended suddenly, and the work stopped. There were plans for civilian versions, which did work but these were never used on a large scale. After the second wave in 1919 everyone began to forget Spanish Influenza and the interest was not restarted until 1933. That year a group of scientists at St Bart's Hospital isolated a true influenza virus. By 1948 workers in the Soviet Union and the USA made killed vaccines which more or less we have today! The Russians and Americans also started to work with live influenza vaccines which we have today.

But a second piece of good news is that the Chinese are lifting their social distancing and the country is slowly getting back to normal. At the same time, an Australian Mathematical model paper is published which clearly predicts that compliance with "social distancing" must be 80 or 90% otherwise it will not work. My friend Peter Doherty in Australia has reminded everyone that the positive effects of this intervention similar to which we are trying to do here) will take 2 weeks to filter through to fewer deaths etc, so do not expect instant results! Incidentally Peter has 'form' because of his Nobel Prize! There must be 80-90% compliance.

More young people are showing serious clinical problems during infections particularly if diabetic and overweight. So, the problems are not confined to the grandparents who seem to be behaving themselves at least as regards social distancing! Incidentally we now have 10 grandchildren including Juliette's latest a couple of weeks ago. Some of you may remember that Juliette worked for a while with Anthony and the medical team at the hotel quarantine in East London probably 10 years ago.

Personally, I would say the best advice is to spend less time watching TV news which is sensational and not very good. Personally, I view this Covid outbreak as akin to a bad winter influenza epidemic. In this case we have had 8000 deaths this last year in the 'at risk' groups viz over 65% people with heart disease etc. I do not feel this current Covid will exceed this number. We are suffering from a media epidemic!



Finally, I am pleased that hVivo/Open Orphan is out there looking for good contracts with COVID, RSV and Influenza. In the long term all 3 viruses are important and the quarantine and laboratory expertise is key to the future. COVID will probably settle down or as a yearly disease like flu.

All regards from my sunny North London garden and Science museum on the top floor!

Professor John Oxford

4 COMMENTS



TERRY

APRIL 02, 2020 - 21:25

8000 deaths. In what country? England/UK?

REPLY



WERNER

APRIL 02, 2020 - 22:28

"The Russians and Americans also started to work with live influenza vaccines which we have today."
The current influenza vaccines are non-live vaccines !

REPLY



KEV HUGHES

APRIL 03, 2020 - 03:59

Thank you for your calm and educated take on this Corona virus. Perhaps you should do more media rounds, if only to add some balance and expertise opinion in this current, negative media frenzy.

REPLY



DAVID HARPER



APRIL 03, 2020 - 08:56

100% agree with you there John. 1,700 UK deaths from 1.7M cases (NHS press release, yesterday, that doesn't even allow for the asymptomatic cases) is seasonal flu levels of risk. I'll be very surprised if we even make 8,000. Deaths are always a tragedy, but so is destruction of the economy.

David Harper

REPLY

REPLY TO ARTICLE

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